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BIDS ON UNION STATION

Trump up for city project

His company is one of 11 seeking to be "master developer" of Denver's redevelopment project, which will serve as a downtown gateway.

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The Donald in Denver?

In a surprise announcement, New York developer Donald Trump's Trump International Hotel & Residences is one of 11 companies or groups of companies seeking city qualification to serve as "master developer" of Denver's historic Union Station redevelopment.

The public project, one of the most significant attempted in Denver, will serve as a gateway to downtown and link the LoDo and Central Platte neighborhoods.

Trump International wasn't on the city's radar before a deadline passed at 5 p.m. Friday. But many of Denver's best-known developers - including those behind the Stapleton, Belmar and Riverfront projects - submitted their names, too.

Trump "didn't come to the preview and had not shown any interest, before now," said Jim Carpenter, policy group director for Denver's Office of Economic Development. The city's request for qualifications was posted on its website, and it also was advertised on the site of the Urban Land Institute, a Washington-based nonprofit focusing on land initiatives.

The famed developer, who stars in his own reality-television show, would find Denver's market more challenging than markets in New York and Miami, said Denver luxury-condo developer Craig Nassi, a fan of Trump's.

"People understand condominiums in those cities. Denver is not a condominium city," said Nassi, who didn't submit a bid for Union Station. "He's been successful pretty much in every market he's been in, but he's never been in a market like this that doesn't have the clientele base."

Trump's team includes New York-based hotel and resort developer Bayrock Group LLC and Barry Group Investments. Attorney Dawn Bookhardt of the Denver law firm Bookhardt & O'Toole submitted the qualifications package on behalf of Trump's team. She could not be reached for comment.

Also submitting as a team were well-known local developers Continuum Partners, developer of Lakewood's Belmar project, and East West Partners, the company that controls much of the land between Union Station and Central Platte Valley. Boston-based transit expert DMJM Harris completes their team.

"We're competent urban developers, but we're not transportation development folks," said Tom Gougeon, chief development officer at Continuum. DMJM Harris is "ranked No. 1 in mass transit."

The Union Station master plan proposes up to 1.4 million square feet of private development, as well as transportation facilities accommodating light rail, passenger rail, bus, taxis, shuttles, vans, limousines, bicycles and pedestrian traffic. The master developer first will work with the city to coordinate the site's transit hub, then shepherd private development on the 19.5-acre site.

The city will select the master developer early next year, Carpenter said.

Others vying for the project include Denver Crossroads Developers LLC, a team that includes Greeley-based Phelps Development, Mosher Sullivan Partners of Denver and Federal Development of Washington, D.C.; Corporex Colorado LLC and Trammell Crow Residential; and Stapleton developer Forest City Development.

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